

# The War at Home

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Summary: It's bigger! It's better! It's more detailed! It's just plain awesome! It's sequel to "The Fight for Sanghelios", this novel continues with Commander Lombardi's story, who must now unite the known races, lest a larger threat loom on the horizon. He must also start to learn the reality of a family, something he has not known for a while. Alternate Universe

## 1. Chapter 1

**\*\*Chapter One\*\***

**\*\*March 27th, 2553 1600 Hours\*\***

**\*\*Orion Council Facility, Qikost\*\***

"Welcome to fuckin' Antarctica sir!" The Marine pilot stated as we touched down on the ground. Qikost was indeed a freezing planet, correction, moon, so everywhere on the moon was like Antarctica. But, it made sense to have the Council here, because not many people would want to hang around here. "Thanks, Lieutenant, have a good one." I stated as I got off the Pelican. I felt extremely odd out of my MJOLNIR Mark VII Commando armor, but I was properly dressed for this cold. A couple of ODSTs came up and greeted me. "Sir, right this way. It's much warmer inside, believe me." I followed the ODSTs towards what appeared to be an old Covenant building and went in through a shield door. As if someone flipped a switch, the instant I passed through it became regular room temperature. As we walked down a hallway one of the ODSTs turned to me. "You don't recognize me do you James?" I knew that voice from somewhere, and I realized who it was. "How are you Ed? Didn't know what happened to you after Sigma Octanus." He chuckled and replied "Not bad, but you're one to talk. Right after the Ark \_you\_ disappeared to god knows where. Then, next thing I know you're a Spartan and the hero of Sangheilius." I laughed and said "Well, I'm sure we'll have time to talk later Buck." He replied and gestured towards a doorway "Indeed, I think Lord Hood's waiting for you, we have yet to see Rtas. Isn't it that?" "Yes," I

answered, "I'll see you."

As I entered the room Lord Hood was sitting down looking at a datapad. He noticed me and smiled. "Hello, James." he spoke. "Hello to you too Lord Hood." I replied. He then said earnestly "Just call me Terrence, we're practically the same rank now, with you being the main representative." I nodded and sat down. "How's Sasha?" He inquired, knowing that I cared for her more than just as a teammate. "She's slowly recovering, they don't know if she'll be able to go into full operational status again though." I answered. "Well, I don't think you'll be either James." He replied. However much I wanted to disagree with him, I knew he was right. Although I had fought war for many years, I now had to become a diplomat. It wasn't the easiest task. He then asked, "What do you think about replacing ONI?" "Why do say that?" I asked back. "You know they were fueling an insurrection, that could turn out to be counterproductive. Especially if we have no idea what they're doing." I then asked back. "Then who would we have for intelligence on future hostiles?" He answered. "I'm pretty sure we can form a joint Intelligence Agency with the Sangheili and possibly the races of the Covenant, should they agree to join." A door opened and a ODS'T walked out. "I think they're all here sir. Come on in."

Terrence and I got up and walked through the door into a room that had a large table in the middle with chairs around it. I saw recognizable chairs, then saw chairs as if they were made for giant people along with different kinds of other chairs. They were for the other races. I sat down as the Sangheili walked in. Thel 'Vadam, the former Arbiter of the Covenant and the leader of the Sangheili, along with Rtas 'Vadum, the leader of the military, and Field Master Avu 'Med 'Telcam sat down. There really wasn't much to discuss, as it had been mostly discussed back on Sangheilios and Lord Hood with HIGHCOM and the President. Mainly we were going to talk to the Covenant leaders right now. "Well, let's get talking with our new friends." I said. Thel saw the humor in this while Rtas and 'Telcam said nothing to this. I hit a button and stated "Alright, bring in the San Shy'yum." A door opened and escorted by a squad of ODS'Ts was a trio of San Shy'yum, otherwise known as Prophets. The Sangheili showed some hostility towards them, but for the most part it was covered. "Hello, Prophets of Equanimity, Vigilance, and Loyalty. We are here today to make you an offer." I could tell 'Vadum was getting, irritated shall I put it, at me referring to them as Prophets, but their titles were their names and they deserved that. Equanimity spoke up, "And what might this offer be? You have clearly defeated us." "We would like to invite your race, and only your race you are representing, to the Orion Council. This is not similar in anyway to the government of the Covenant. With this we all retain our own governments, and laws that apply to our races, but we must follow laws we come up with here. However, before I get into details, I need to get this out of the way." I nodded to the AI, Black Box, who had volunteered to temporarily help out. With that, a hologram of the galaxy appeared, with the Orion arm labeled along with the locations of the Halo Installations, Forerunner Shield Worlds, and known worlds. "Now I hate to say this, but your religion is based on a misinterpretation of a Forerunner glyph, along with a message." A glyph appeared and I stated, "This glyph here, what you think is 'Reclamation', actually means 'Reclaimer'." The glyph turned 180 degrees to show it upright. "The Great Journey was from a message of the Didact, the leader of the Forerunner military to his wife, the Librarian, who had stayed on Earth to make sure the construction of

the Portal was completed. What you think is transcendence is simply the activation of a weapon of mass destruction that annihilates all sentient organisms with 25,000 light years in order to combat the Flood." The Hologram transformed to show a facility that appeared to have samples, "As seen here from Installation 03, after the Forerunners activated the Array, and consequently annihilated all sentient life within range, including the Forerunners and the Flood, the Forerunner constructs reseeded life. This is the reason why we're here, we weren't left behind." I prepared myself for the religious attack, but it never came. Instead the Prophet of Vigilance sighed. "While it is, troubling, to hear your words, we know we must accept the truth." I relaxed a bit, these Prophets, who apparently were the leaders of the Covenant Fleet, the last one that was known at that, seemed reasonable, and more importantly intelligent. "So you wish us to join your Council, yes?" Equanimity asked. "We do, but it is entirely your option. With this Council we are hoping to prevent any future wars and if there are any bigger threats, such as the Flood, lurking out there, that we're prepared. Look at the Forerunners, they had one of the most technologically advanced societies ever known, but because they refused to let others fight with them, they fell." I answered. Loyalty spoke up, "What of the Covenant? Surely they won't all agree to this." I sighed silently and explained again. "There is no more Covenant. Either way, the Council's joint forces is separating the races, you will represent only the San Shy'yum." The San Shy'yum proceeded to mutter amongst themselves and finally reached a decision. "We will join this Council." Equanimity stated. "Good, we'll have a meeting next week." I stated. The ODSs escorted them out and then I turned to the Sangheili. "Well, that's one less enemy we have to deal with." I stated. Thel replied, "Indeed, but what of your ONI?" I took a breath and stated. "I have agreed with Lord Hood's suggestion, I believe ONI is too out of control to be kept in operation. We can create a joint Intelligence Agency with the Council, combined with the joint military force." Lord Hood spoke up, "There is a slight problem, however. After ONI recovered Doctor Halsey, our former ONI scientist, they transferred one of their prisoners they had captured during your last armaments deal, 'Telcam. His name is Jul 'Mdama. I am sure we can all agree that he needs to be released immediately." 'Telcam seemed actually conflicted of this and stated, "I am not sure if that is the wisest idea. Granted, he was captured, and then withheld from our knowledge, but at the same time his, views, on humanity are quite conflicting with what we are attempting to do. He may destroy what we are trying to build." I decided that I needed to say something. "No, we can't leave him in an ONI research facility, at the very least he deserves to be released. If he becomes a problem, I'm sure we can take care of it. If we keep him, and his presence is leaked, that will become a horrible situation." Everyone nodded at this and Rtas spoke for the first time "So is the session adjourned?" "I believe for today yes." I replied. Everyone got up and proceeded to leave and Buck was waiting outside for me. "How are things going?" He asked as he beckoned me to follow. I nodded at Lord Hood and followed him. "Just fine, right now." I answered. "Good, because you know me, if there's going to be fighting I like to know." He replied, half serious. "Oh yeah, and I got a comm from someone named 'Pyro' from the UNSC Hopeful, he said that Sasha's able to move around, and can come here." He informed me. "He make any jackass remarks?" I asked. "If you mean him saying something about 'driving your girlfriend all around' then yes." I chuckled at this. "Well, tell him that everything's just fine, and as long as Sasha doesn't mind the cold, it's good here." We stopped in front of a door and he gestured towards it. "Guess everyone who's stationed

here get's a damn room. Not just a bed, but a room!" He said with clear joy. For a lot of the UNSC veterans, the barracks were home. I think the last time I had actually had a room to myself was back in 2524, before I signed up for the Colonial Militia on Harvest. I walked inside and it reminded me of a fancy hotel room. "Everyone has this?" I asked. "Yeah, even us troopers." He replied. "Good, because otherwise I would have given you my room." I stated honestly. "Wouldn't be surprised James. I'll let you know when Sasha is here." He informed me as he walked off. He didn't really know anything about who Sasha was, but I am sure he could infer. As I sat down at a desk, I started to think about how I had become friends with Gunnery Sergeant Edward Buck.

I met him in the Outer Colonies, when humanity had Admiral Cole leading victories, and there was some hope of survival. When he joined, I was a Master Sergeant, and he was Private Edward Buck. Over the years, we became good friends and surprisingly he never was wounded. The last time before now I had seen him was at Sigma Octanus IV when I was Major and led my regiment. After that he had disappeared. I sat for a while just thinking about the war, and generally wondering how the hell I had survived it all. My thoughts were interrupted when I heard a particularly rowdy voice emanating from the hallway. There was only one person that voice could belong to. I opened the door and walking down the hall was Pyro and Sasha.

"Goddamn, Commander, you know how irritating it is to usher along a tip-toeing Spartan?" Pyro joked. "You know how irritating it is to listen to your remarks Pyro?" Sasha replied. "Well, anyways it's better to do this than go and continuously get debriefed by ONI." He spoke. Sasha was walking a bit slower than a normal person would, no doubt because of the fact she had been shot. "Oh yeah, and Commander, you mind me sticking around? I know it's going to be boring here, but it's sure going to be less boring than whatever else ONI has planned." "Sure," I replied, "Go talk to a Gunnery Sergeant Buck." "That guy?" He stated as if surprised. He then turned to leave, and I helped Sasha inside. "What's the medical plan with you?" I asked. "I'm supposed to see the onsite doctor once a week, twice if there's problems." She replied as she sat down on a couch. "But enough about me, what's been going on with you?" She asked. "Well, I'm right now trying to get everyone to be friends, and I know it's not going to be easy." She chuckled, "You ought to see the stuff on the Waypoint. There's debates as to what's going to happen." I stood there for a second, wondering who had said something about the Council. "I know that look, turn on the TV." She preferred to call it that, and I honestly didn't care. I turned it on and went to Waypoint Nine. A male and a female reporter were sitting talking about this. "So that still doesn't answer the question, why are we making nice with the things that were killing us not even a year ago?" The male one criticized. The female one replied, "I don't know. But Commander Lombardi seems to think it's not a problem." I turned it off and was irritated. "Why hasn't the President said anything?" She looked at me as if something was wrong. "Sangheilios really must have screwed up your focus, she's coming here." She answered. Wow, I really was thick occasionally. Three representatives, why wouldn't the President be here. "So until the President says something, I'm a pariah." She chuckled. "Whatever, they didn't have to fight. And anyways, from what I understand, just about everyone on Sanghelios thinks you're a hero." She stopped as if she realized something. "What about ONI? How are you..." I interrupted her, "We are already considering it, and

we're also making sure a Sangheili prisoner they have returns home." We sat there and just remained silent. "Say, isn't around dinner time? We should head to the mess hall." She broke the silence. "I don't think you should do that, Sasha. You weren't walking that well when you came here." She grunted as she got up clearly not in the state she said she was. "I'm fine." "I can get some dinner, you need to sit down." She almost now apologized, "I just don't want to mess with your schedule." I looked at her surprised. "Sasha, I care about you alot. I don't care, I just want to make sure you're alright."

After we finished up dinner and Pyro, who had stopped in to have dinner with us, left, she asked, "So I presume I'm staying with you?" "Why not?" I answered. "I guess I'll sleep on the couch, I -" I cut her off. "I think you got something screwed up when you got shot, I'm fine with you sleeping in my bed. And I don't mean that the way Pyro would take that." We chuckled and I helped her over. We both had our uniforms on and that was fine. Didn't need to start having, close experiences, quite yet. "Thanks," she said. "Good night." As I turned out the light, I replied. "Good night to you too."

## 2. Chapter 2

**\*\*Chapter Two\*\***

**\*\*March 28th, 2553 0530 Hours\*\***

**\*\*Orion Council Facility, Qikost\*\***

"Good morning," Sasha said as I woke up. "Morning, I think from what Buck said breakfast should be here." I helped Sasha over to the table and went and grabbed the package at the door. "Should be a damn sight better than those MREs." I half-joked, although the MREs were not a great thing to live on, especially after 27 years. "I guess we're having waffles, last time I had these I was on Harvest." I informed as I got out the biodegrading dishes and waffles. After we finished the first real meal I had in years I asked, "Where are you going?" As Sasha headed for the door. "Doctor's, have to do some initial onsite checkup shit." "Alright, I'll help you over there, and if you want I'll stay." She looked back at me, a bit shocked. "Don't stay, you've got to get work done." After I helped her over to the onsite hospital, I went over to the Council "waiting room" as I called it. An ODST blurted out, "You're a bit late sir," but as Buck was nearby, Buck then glared at him. I went in and Lord Hood and Dr. Ruth Charet was waiting. She got up and shook my hand. "Pleasure to meet you James, you're quite a legend among the forces." She greeted. "Just was doing my job as a Marine, and a Spartan." I replied. "There's no need to treat me as a higher-up, I am subordinate to you in this case." The President replied. "Looks like our Brute friends are ready." An ODST stated as he opened the door. As we walked in I told him, "They're called Jiralhanae, not Brutes." He had no reply to this and we sat down as the Sangheili did. Thel offered his hand to shake Dr. Charet's and she politely appraised him. The doors opened and Rtas immediately looked hostile. Escorted by two squads of ODSTs, were three Jiralhanae, presumably the one in the center the Chieftain. The Chieftain looked at Rtas and the feeling was presumably mutual. "Well, let's get that not to happen," I thought. "Hello Dideus, please sit down." The large Jiralhanae sat down in the chairs, one of them growling quietly. Dideus made a gesture towards

him. "Chieftain, we want to offer you an opportunity to join our Council. Right now, the San Shy'yum, Sangheili, and humanity are members and we are hoping to have the other races join. But it is entirely up to you and your associates." The other Jiralhanae snorted speaking before Dideus, "And if we refuse?" I asked right back, "I don't know what you mean by that. It is entirely your option. You have the option to get up and leave, and return to where ever you so please. If you join, not just your race, but all of the known races may have a chance against a threat such as the Flood, should it occur." Dideus was silent for a moment, almost reminiscent of a human pondering. I decided to throw in the second part of what needed to be said, "I know you are believers of the Great Journey, but it never truly occurred." I nodded and the control room of a Halo Installation appeared. Delta Halo, "Great experience there," I thought. "This is the mission camera from the late Sergeant Major Avery Junior Johnson, who died after 343 Guilty Spark, a presumably rampant Monitor in charge of Installation 04, killed him on the Ark. This is from Delta Halo, or Installation 05." Thel seemed to be in a bit of a trance, as this had occurred less than a year ago. The Jiralhanae Chieftain was holding Miranda Keyes and the Index, while one of his bodyguards was holding the Monitor. "Come human, it is easy." The Brute demanded, "Take the Index in your hands, and do as you are told!" The Monitor seemed to take offense at the treatment of Commander Keyes and warned, "Please use caution! This Reclaimer is delicate!" Tartarus turned and shouted at the Monitor "One more word Oracle, and I will rip your eye from its socket!" He then turned to Keyes again and said menacingly, "Which is nothing compared to what I'll do to you." Thel walked towards the Jiralhanae and spoke. "Tartarus, stop." The Chieftain stated under his breath, "Impossible," "Put the down the Icon." Thel stated. "And disobey an order from the Hierarchs?" Tartarus spat. "There are things about Halo, not even the Prophets understand." The bodyguards started to growl but Tartarus held his arms out. "Take care, Arbiter, what you say is heresy." He spoke back. Thel then asked, "Is it? Oracle, what is Halo's purpose?" The Monitor started to cheerfully respond "Collectively, the seven rings -" Tartarus grabbed the Monitor and held it up to his face. "Not another word!" He demanded. Johnson then decided to speak up, "Please, don't shake the lightbulb." The Sergeant Major said in his usual half-macho attitude. The bodyguards then started to move towards him, but the Sergeant informed the Chieftain "If you want to keep your brain inside your head, I'd recommend telling your boys to chill." The Chieftain made a bark and the bodyguards stopped. The Sergeant then told Thel, "Go ahead, do your thing." Thel proceeded to ask the Monitor, "The Sacred Rings, what are they?" The Monitor informed him in his cheerful tone, "Weapons of last resort, built by the Forerunners to eliminate potential Flood hosts, thereby rendering the parasite harmless." Thel then asked, "And the Forerunners, what happened to them?" The Monitor replied once again in his tone, "They, along with all sentient life within three radii of the galactic core died, as planned. Would you like to see the relevant data?" Thel turned to Tartarus, "Tartarus, the Prophets have betrayed us." Thel informed him, trying to convince him of the truth. The Chieftain looked at the Monitor and threw it at Johnson. Tartarus turned and shoved Keyes' hand, which had the Index, into the panel, which activated the Installation. He turned back to the Arbiter, gripping his gravity hammer, "No, Arbiter! The Great Journey has begun, and the Brutes, not the Elites, will be the Prophet's escort!" Black Box ended the recording. I turned back to look at the Jiralhanae who looked both betrayed and furious. "So, as seen here," I informed them, "both the Sangheili and humanity attempted to relay the real

purpose of the Halo Array, but your previous Chieftain was too zealous to hear the truth." Dideus clenched his fist and then relaxed. "I will not follow in Tartarus's example." He stated. "I have a duty, and it is to my people, not the Covenant's. Your Council is the controlling government?" I replied to him, "No, we make some laws, but the races retain their own governments and laws. But, we do have a joint military." Dideus stood up, and the ODSs got visibly nervous. He offered his hand to me. "Then I agree, the Jiralhanae will join." I shook it and he turned to Rtas, "As for you, I wish to have a discussion with you later." He offered. Rtas replied, almost like he calculated his response, "Very well." Before everyone left, I informed the Chieftain, "Our meeting with all the races will be next week."

>When I got out to the "waiting room" Pyro was sitting there, watching Waypoint. He noticed me and shut off the TV. "So you made friends with the apes?" He asked. "For now," I answered. "Where's Sasha?" "She's in the mess hall, do you mind if I sit with you and her?" He answered and asked. "Sure, so what's the Waypoint doing better than you?" I asked as him and I walked along. "Pretty much everything right now, anyone who's never served is spreading rumors about you, and doing a better job than me. Those bastards." I laughed and he smiled. "Anyways, is ONI really going to be disbanded?" he asked, "Yes, they're a bit out of control. Why do you ask?" He didn't reply. We entered the mess hall and an ODS beckoned me over to a table where Sasha was. "Hello Ed, how's it going?" He smiled as we sat down, "Not bad, I got you your favorite, you can say it tastes like chicken." He joked. "Anyways, I heard that for a minute my guys were worried the Brutes were going to started trashing the place." I replied back, "They're called Jiralhanae, Ed. And everything's under control." "Huh, well apparently some Sangheili are coming here, apparently Veronica is going to someplace named Treyelvan to get a prisoner." Buck informed me while we started eating. Sasha spoke up, "Veronica? Who's that?" Buck replied with a bit of defensiveness, "She's a Captain with ONI, Section One. She's not one of the bad spooks, I'll tell you that right now. Anyways, a while back, I had," He stopped for a minute as if trying to find the courage, "proposed to her, and never got a response. Then, I get sent into New Mombasa, and she's leading the op." A pair of Sangheili walked into the hall and I realized who they must have been. I got up and walked directly over to them, "You were told to come here, correct?" The one on the left spat, who looked oddly familiar, "Me and Raia, his wife, were told that you knew something about Jul. What have you done with him?" I replied back, "He's being brought back from our Intelligence Agency, which may I add is being shut down, he was taken as a prisoner." Raia turned and glared at the one on the left "You let him do this Forze? Have you no shame?" Forze, he was part of the former insurrection. Forze jabbed back "You are the one who has no control over him. But he was right about the humans, they may have saved us, but they are devious nonetheless." "Listen, Jul will be here within 48 hours, please just wait, if you want I can get Field Master 'Telcam." Forze started to respond but Raia cut him off, "Very well, perhaps he can talk some sense into this man." I radioed for 'Telcam and he arrived and greeted the two. He then gestured for them to follow and I sat back down. "You see what I mean by how hard this is going to be?" Pyro stated dead serious.<p>

### 3. Chapter 3

**\*\*Chapter Three\*\***

**\*\*March 30th, 2553 1200 Hours\*\***

**\*\*Orion Council Facility, Qikost\*\***

Over the course of the next few days, the Council spoke with the rest of the former Covenant's races, the Unggoy being the most eager to join. The Kig-Yar were a bit unwilling initially to join, due to the laws, but the Shipmistress in charge agreed. But now I was standing outside with Sasha, along with Forze and Raia, and Buck. Sasha and I were looking at Sanghelios, "If there was any planet that could remind us of what we are trying to prevent, Sanghelios is probably the best." She stated wearily. "Well, I know you wanted to get outside, so I made sure you could." I replied. We were standing waiting for the UNSC Pelican which had Jul 'Mdama on board, who apparently had been a bit doubtful of Captain Dare's claim. However, he seemed to now believe we were actually being truthful. "Bravo Nine-Two requesting permission to land." Buck's voice replied to the comm, "Roger, you are cleared to land." Buck was, if you don't remember, the man in charge of the security of the facility. A Pelican appeared and got larger until it was directly in front of us and landed. The hatch opened and first out came a Sangheili, presumably Jul 'Mdama. He noticed Forze and Raia and walked over, seemingly for the moment not worried about us. A woman came out wearing Recon armor, ONI standard issue. "Veronica, it's good to see you." Buck said as he went over. Sasha and I decided to head in, and as I helped her inside a voice called my name. It spoke English, although it was at a shaky level, not as good as Forze and Raia's, but understandable. "You are Commander Lombardi?" I replied honestly, "Yes, if you want to talk, please walk with me and Sasha, she was wounded when we inserted onto Sanghelios in order to rescue Thel 'Vadam, and then proceeded to activate a Sentinel factory." Jul 'Mdama walked up and talked hesitantly. "From what I understand, other than saving Sanghelios, you personally believed I should have been released, when no one else, not even my fellow Sangheili agreed." I replied, "Yes I did." I felt some of Sasha's weight disappear and I realized Jul was helping. "I wish to thank you, not all humans are devious, just the ones from your 'ONI'." "Well that's going away, just to let you know." He nodded and he informed me, "If you ever need anything, tell me." We got to my room, which was also Sasha's and I said, "Thanks, I have a feeling I'll see you again Jul." I helped Sasha onto the couch and she asked. "James, why don't we just get married here? I'm sure there's the legal shit here." I smiled and stated, "Well, as long as they don't have us doing all that wedding bullshit," We both laughed, "I think that should be good." I pulled out my datapad, "In fact, I think I can access the forms." After a few minutes of both me and Sasha filling out the forms we were legally married. "Well, Mrs. Lombardi, I love you." She laughed and spoke back, "I love you too James."

#### 4. Chapter 4

**\*\*Chapter Four\*\***

**\*\*April 3rd, 2553 0800 Hours\*\***

**\*\*Orion Council Facility, Qikost\*\***

The weekend passed by quickly, and I definitely saw the other races



attempting to interact with each other. The Jiralhanae and Sangheili, along with the Kig-Yar and Unggoy, were a bit tense but for the most part everything was working out. "Well, today's the day we actually put that to the test." I thought as I headed for the "waiting room" after leaving the facility's hospital. I had helped Sasha over for the checkup and then left. The President was clearly unnerved, although she did a decent job of hiding it. Lord Hood looked as if he was preparing for a losing fight, and I was scared shitless. Would this Council actually work out? "Sir, come on in." An ODSI informed us and went in. One section of the room had shield doors that had a different atmosphere within. Methane for the Unggoy, so they didn't have to wear their harnesses. "Well, time to write history," Lord Hood muttered as we sat down. The rest of the races walked in and I prayed, even though I was not and am not religious, that this would not fall apart. I stood up, and started to speak a speech that I had never planned, but seemed fitting. "Sangheili, San Shy'yum, Jiralhanae, Mgalekgolo, Yanme'e, Kig-Yar, Unggoy, and Humanity. We are here today to ensure the survival of not only our own species, but others, knowing that if we are unified, we will not fall easily. We may harbor resentments, but these resentments are no different than amongst our own kind, we are all living, and all sentient. Every life is precious, and it should never be wasted. Let us convene together, lest we fall alone. Welcome to the Orion Council." I felt all eyes on me, but one of the Unggoy leader's assistants started clapping, then another, and soon enough the whole table was clapping. As I sat back down, Dr. Charet muttered, "That's one Waypoint should have seen, James." Lord Hood spoke up, "First and foremost, the UNSC is shutting down the Office of Naval Intelligence, due to lack of control and their undoing of what we must do. However, all of our militaries, or I should say, our military, needs an Intelligence agency. But we need to know what is happening with it and authorize certain actions." 'Telcam spoke up, "I agree, we do require one, however, humanity is the only race here who has ever had a fully dedicated Intelligence agency. The only thing the former Covenant had that was similar was Special Operations, but that was mainly for taking out high-priority targets." Everyone agreed on this point. "What about Captain Dare? She could lead the agency, she's not one of the backstabbing spooks." Charet suggested. "You mean the one that brought Jul back?" 'Telcam asked. "Yes," she answered. After an hour of discussion we finally reached a decision. Captain Veronica Dare, correction, Rear Admiral Veronica Dare, would lead the Orion Intelligence Task Force. But there would be every race in the task force. "One victory," I thought. Equanimity spoke, "What about this facility? Most of us are leaders amongst our people, and we cannot have a Council daily. But we cannot just leave this place be either, it would be, symbolically, separating." No one knew what to say, it was something everyone in the room knew had to happen, but didn't know to actually do. "I say we have one of the representatives from each of our races stay here, and start a small settlement. Of course we'll need more from our individual species, but it shouldn't be mandatory for any of them. I can stay, there's not much other than this I really have to take care of." I stated. 'Telcam stated. "I agree, and with Thel's blessing I volunteer to stay." Slowly one by one, they volunteered. At the end, eight council members would be making this their new abode. "I believe we should recess until tomorrow, we have covered what we needed to for this day of the week." Everyone agreed and when I got out once again Pyro was waiting, however, he seemed worried. "What's going on Pyro?" I asked, the worry extending to me. "Sasha said that something happened over at the hospital, and she refuses to tell anyone but you first."

"Let's go then." I replied. I raced over with Pyro and headed over to where Sasha was, and she smiled. "What's going on Sasha?" I asked worriedly as I walked over to her. "There's going to be a third member of the Lombardi family." She whispered.

>All I can remember was the fact I was happy, much happier than anything else I had ever been happy about. I hugged Sasha and Pyro told me and Sasha, clearly surprised. "Wait, what? You guys did it finally? Damn, thought there would have been a bit more of a heads-up you know. Ah well, at least I get to teach him how to become a jackass." Pyro joked. "I don't think that's going to be happening anytime soon, not when I'm around." A familiar voice responded. "Damn, first you take the good guns and now you rob me of my opportunity Carter." Pyro replied as Rook came in. Rook leaned against the wall and started talking, "I came here just to visit, we finally got done debriefing, but I guess it was a great time to." "I agree with you, definitely Pyro has missed some of his scared-shitless appointments with me." Ghost said as he walked right on in. Sasha asked, "Where's Tank and Techie?" Pyro started grinning and answered, "Probably going over schematics or whatever the hell their excuse is for just not even admitting it to anyone else. I really think you should have left Ghost and I to protect Phillips, at least Ghost would have made Phillips scared shitless." The doctor, who had not said anything to make their presence known finally decided to talk, "I appreciate your visiting with your teammates, but I do need to talk to James and Sasha for a few moments." Pyro decided not to make a smartass remark and they left, leaving Sasha, the doctor, and I. "Now, I recognize this is a very good thing for both of you, there are a few factors we need to take into account." I asked, "What factors?" My fear clearly audible. "Well, for one, your child will have the traits of a SPARTAN-IV, in other words, it will be genetically Spartan from birth. Another problem is when the child actually is born, Sasha needs to be able to do this, or we risk death." Sasha seemed a bit stunned but asked, "So what you're saying is, I need to heal faster." The doctor answered. "Yes, but no need to worry, after collaborating with some of the Huragok ONI had found, we have come up with a way to speed up recovery about ten times faster. Also, it won't affect your baby in the slightest, it is designed by some way of Forerunner tech to only genetically work with Sasha." Sasha and I let out a sigh of relief. "In fact, here it is." The doctor got out a jar of pills, "Just once a week is necessary, although there is no harm or benefit in taking it more than once a week." Sasha took the jar and got one of the pills out and swallowed it. "I believe that's everything, and I will see you next week Sasha, and James." The doctor finished. I helped Sasha up and while we were walking the other three of my teammates weren't there, they probably went to the mess hall. Sasha told me, "Pretty much what happened was the doctor was doing the standard scans okay? So then he says there's an abnormal growth of cells in the womb, then he realizes what it is. He then says he can leave a message with you, but I refused to do that. I wanted to tell you first." I smiled and I opened the door to our room. "Well, I'm just glad that you're ok, and now perhaps our child will be able to live without having to worry about the war." She smiled and sat down. "How was the meeting?" She asked. "ONI's officially going to be replaced by OITF, and Veronica Dare's going to lead it. And there will also be the other races living here." She nodded and hugged me. "Good to know James, good to know."<p>

## **\*\*Chapter Five\*\***

**\*\*January 16th, 2554 0900 Hours\*\***

**\*\*Orion Council Settlement, Qikost\*\***

"Do you mind if we come along, I am sure a day's difference will not make trouble." Equanimity asked. Over the course of the year, a whole small town had been made here, and I had become close friends with Equanimity, 'Telcam, Dideus, and Jul. "I don't care, I'm sure Sasha will appreciate you visiting." A day or two ago Sasha was transferred to the hospital, just to get ready. I had slept in her room, not wanting to miss anything unless a Council issue came up. As Equanimity, Thel, 'Telcam, Dideus and I headed towards the hospital Jul caught up, obviously wanting to visit too. When we finally got over there, the rest of my old team was there. Well, it really wasn't old, they just hadn't been called into action and I was officially transferred but they lived here. As they greeted us doctors raced by, what was going on? A nurse came up to me, "She's gone into labor."

>I won't go into the details, as to me they may not be disturbing, but to others it may seem inappropriate. After 7 hours, Samantha Elizabeth Lombardi came into this world. She was the most beautiful thing I have ever seen. She looked like her mother, yet her eyes had a spark like mine back on Harvest. Together, Sasha and I looked at our future.<br>A week or two passed and I believe everyone in the settlement came around to look at Samantha. Then, when the time came for the monthly council meeting, I had to pull myself away, or, more accurately, Sasha had to, from Samantha. The meeting lasted not too long and when I came back Sasha was asleep. Samantha was asleep in her crib and I decided to just let them rest. As I sat down my thoughts turned to those at Harvest.

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Hello readers! In case you're wondering, there will be occasionally flashback scenes in order to explain Lombardi's past. As I like to look at it, "The Fight for Sanghelios" sets the stage, while this explains the story of Lombardi. Back to Harvest!

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**\*\*January, 2525\*\***

**\*\*Harvest\*\***

"Wake up dunderhead, we're here." A voice jarred me from my sleep. The bus taking us to the Colonial Militia training facility had taken hours to get there, and I had fallen asleep. The bus stopped and the door opened and one of the most unpleasant yet respectable people I would ever meet greeted me in a thick Irish accent. "Get going ye shiteheads!" I followed the man's orders and got outside of the bus only to be greeted by another Marine. He was a dark-skinned man, Sweet Williams cigar in his mouth, and he greeted us. "My name's Sergeant Avery J. Johnson, this man is Sergeant Nolan Byrne. We will be your trainers, and you will follow our orders at all times or the Captain's." A man with a prosthetic arm walked up and introduced himself. "I am Captain Ponders, as Sergeant Johnson has informed you, you will follow any orders him, Byrne, or I give you. Are there any questions?" One of the recruits shouted, snickering, "When do we get

to eat?" The Captain nodded and Byrne descended on the man, shoving him on the ground and grabbed him by the collar. "You will eat when we tell you to eat, you will sleep when we tell you to sleep, you will shite when we tell you to shite. Do you understand me farmboy?" The recruit nodded and Byrne still wasn't satisfied, "I SAID DO YOU UNDERSTAND ME YOU PIECE OF SHITE FARMBOY?" The recruit tried to yell as loud as he could, "SIR, YES SIR!" Byrne threw him back to the ground and walked back over to Sergeant Johnson and the Captain. The Captain inquired, "Any other questions?" No one even breathed. "Alright, Sergeant Johnson and Byrne, you may proceed." Johnson shouted, "All recruits who were on the left side of the bus are with Byrne, right side me." I went over to Johnson and he looked me over as if he was amused. "What's your name recruit?" He asked. "James Harrison Lombardi sir!" I replied. He had no reply and shouted, "All right Platoon! Fall in behind me, we're going for a nice jog!" What a nice jog turned out to be was a 5 kilometer jog and when we got back to the compound every one of the recruits was sweating a storm and was trying to grasp their breath. "You pathetic shiteheads can't deal with a simple jog? What are you going to do when Innies are shooting at you from every goddamn building!" Byrne shouted. "All right, platoons, you're dismissed for dinner." This dinner turned out to be my first MRE, a man sat down next to me. "I am Wallace Jenkins, mind if I sit here?" Jenkins asked. "I don't mind, I'm James Lombardi." Another man came by and sat down. "Carter Thompson." The man introduced himself. I recognized the voice as the one who had been the smartass. "Goddamn, I thought I was a jackass, Byrne's just a whole new level." I chuckled at this.

>The weeks passed by with Byrne and Johnson testing us to our extremes, breaking us down mentally and physically, then rebuilding us into soldiers. Finally, after Johnson and Byrne had left for somewhere and returned, the true life-changing moment happened. After the Reveille we got outside of the barracks and Johnson, Byrne, Captain Ponder, and a woman were standing there. "All right trainees, we have some news for you." Johnson stated, with a trace of fear in his voice. "An alien race will be comin' on down to talk to Governor Thune, and you," he pondered a moment, "militiamen will be providing security. This will be different than previous exercises, you will, if need be, be using live rounds and may be shot back at." I was shocked as were the other recruits.<p>

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A voice jarred me out of my daydream and Pyro was standing in front of me. "Damn, don't do that." He laughed and said, "You left the door open dumbass. What were you thinking about?" He asked. I answered, "Harvest." His voice became the slightest bit solemn, "That was a long time ago, James." I replied, "I know, but still. I remember the first day of training, and you getting beat on by Byrne." He chuckled and said, "As I said, he was just another level of jackass."

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Hey again, guess what! I am going to do some more of these flashbacks, so they may not be totally described as to what Commander Lombardi is doing while he's reminiscing. Back to the story!

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\*\*August 23rd, 2528 0747 Hours\*\*

**\*\*Harvest\*\***

"Carter, what's your status?" I commed over. It had been over three years since first contact with the Covenant, and after I had escaped from there along with the rest of the population we could save, militiamen, and the Sergeants. When I heard that Admiral Cole, one of the legendary Admirals was leading the largest fleet ever assembled to retake Harvest I immediately volunteered in the Marines. Carter had also volunteered, wanting to get payback from the bastards who had destroyed our world. And, as if by sheer luck, he was in my same squad. But Harvest had been hell, Admiral Cole had defeated the Covenant fleet about two years ago, but the Covenant had major ground resistance. In other words, we were going to have to pay many lives to get it back. About six months earlier I had been promoted to Sergeant after our previous Sergeant died by an Elite's energy sword. "Our surprise for the split-lips is ready to go." Carter replied. "Alright, you and Deveraux get back here." I ordered. Currently my squad was doing guerilla tactics, the Covenant had dug in deep, and we were part of the force that was supposed to retake the Capital. But the goddamn Covies shot down our air support and soon enough the remnants of the main attacking force retreated. Luckily for our squad, we were part of the front line that got cut off, so we were trapped inside, trying to survive and take out as many of them as we could. This whole experience reminded me of the Battle of Stalingrad in the 20th century. A door opened and Lopez aimed his MA5B at it, and a voice jeered, "Damn Juan, you think the Covies are our height?" "Good to see you got back in one piece Carter." I told him. "So why did you have me risk my life to plant LOTUS mines?" He asked, I pulled up a photo taken from orbit of the Capital city. A few clicks away from us, was the place wanted to get to. "The Covenant are excavating something, we need to know what. As for the mines, to provide a distraction. Lopez if you would do the honors." He nodded and shot off his MA5B at the street. The grunts on patrol noticed and started to move towards us, "Alright let's go!" We raced out of the building and the second we were out I triggered the mines, detonating the base of the building. There would hopefully be two good things that would come out of this, one being Covenant casualties, the other being them thinking we died with the building's collapse. As we went through the rubble of a building the familiar hum of a Wraith started. "Get down!" I hissed, and we let a Covenant patrol pass us to the building where we detonated the mines. As we moved from street to street we passed the ruins of an elementary school, which made my squad and I solemn. "They're going to pay for this," Private Dubbo muttered. Everyone silently agreed. After a few hours of dashing madly and being generally scared shitless, we found a place to settle for the day. Not good to move around during it. It was a small derelict building that even the Covenant had thought was abandoned, but it would serve our purposes. We gathered around the door. "Carter, breach it." He nodded and walked up to the door and kicked it down and we dashed in. I was the first in and as soon as I entered I felt a gun barrel aimed at my head. >"Damn, James, you had us scared shitless." A familiar voice stated. I turned to look and there to greet me was Private Jenkins, the same recruit I had met years prior. "We thought the damn Covenant was going to slaughter us." Another familiar voice spoke up, this one much more confident and slightly macho sounding. "Good to see you recruit, or I suppose Sergeant." The voice's owner stepped forward and the light revealed him to be my former Colonial Militia trainer, Sergeant Avery J. Johnson. As the rest of my squad came in he

explained his situation, "We were on the frontlines, and when the Covenant cut off our support we hid as quick as we could. Right now me and Jenkins are the only two left." I held a moment of silence for the fallen Marines. I asked, "You have a radio Johnson? Ours can only perform TEAMCOM." "Yeah, but we've been hesitant to use it." He replied, it was understandable. Transmitting on a radio would give away their position. "Sarge, I got a transmission on the E-Band, it's from the fleet." Jenkins informed us, "Put it through," He replied. A crackled voice emanated, "Any UNSC forces that are within Utgard, be advised. A special operations team is inserting to perform a mission. Any squads that are capable are ordered to assist. Their insertion grid is Three by Two Alpha." The voice stopped and Johnson looked at me, "James, my squad is just me and Jenkins, we're the same rank, but I think you should take lead on this one." I nodded and Carter's voice came over, "You're giving that to him? Damn, I thought you were a jackass, guess you've gone soft." "Good to see you too, Carter." Johnson replied. "Not to worry you guys or anything, but the insertion grid is right where we are." Lopez informed me. "Damn, there's a lot of Covenant activity. They're looking for something." Deveraux commented. I looked out the window and indeed a couple of clicks away I could see Scarabs at work, excavating. "I think they're sending in ODSs," Jenkins told me. "Why do you say that?" I asked him. "Look at the sky." I looked up and saw what appeared to be meteors.  
We waited for them to hit the ground and as soon as they did I went over to greet the command pod. There was only the size of a small squad so presumably there would be a Sergeant awaiting me. "Hello Sergea-" I stopped, totally petrified in fear of what came out. Instead of a ODS clad in their traditional armor, a giant thing came out covered in green. Where their helmet was the visor was gold. On the chestplate lettering stated 117. My IFF identified him as a Chief Petty Officer. "Sergeant Lombardi?" A masculine voice emanated. I stuttered, "Yes?" The thing replied, "You and your squad as of now are under my command, directly from NAVSPECOPS orders. I am Chief Petty Officer SPARTAN-117." "Yes sir, right this way." More of the giants appeared from their pods, albeit some of them in different colored and appearing armor. I led them over to the squad who had the exact same reaction as me. The "Spartan" informed them of what he had told me. We went back to our hiding spot and the Spartan informed one of the others to take up watch for Covies. The one nodded and went over to a window, drawing out a sniper rifle. "Alright, Marines, our orders are to find out what the Covenant are excavating at the site 2 clicks north." The Spartan informed. "My squad was headed there as well." I told him. He gave no visible response. "It's going to be a bit of a challenge, John, there's a lot of Covenant reinforcements." The one at the window told presumably the SPARTAN-117. He nodded and presumed to be deep in thought. However, I already had a plan. "Sir, I have an idea." He appraised me and nodded, "What might that be Marine?" I informed him. "There's AA turrets preventing air support from getting here, much less at the site. If we take them out it will distract them and air support could easily take out the resistance." I felt like the Spartan smiled under his helmet. "The AA turrets are circled near, but not next to the site. If move quickly and hit them all at once we could be able to prevent us from being overrun." The Spartan nodded and looked over at the others. "Alright, Sergeant we'll do your plan. Red Team let's roll."

>"SPARTAN-058 and 051 in position, along with Charlie Team." One of the other Spartans radioed to the SPARTAN-117. This one in particular seemed much more outgoing than the others, initiating conversation. His name was Kurt, apparently. Nothing more. How odd. "Just get me right near that thing's core and you'll get a guaranteed boom."

Carter told him. Along with Carter, I, and the two Spartans was Private Jenkins. SPARTAN-117's voice came over the comm, "Alright, execute." Before my fellow marines could even get up from cover, the one with the Sniper rifle opened fire on the grunts on the plasma cannons. Kurt was already ahead, firing at the Elites. After a minute the nearby Covenant forces were dead. "Red team, be advised, they've pulled the alarm. Recommend you get those explosives detonated now over." A Spartan's voice came over. "Yeah, yeah, I'm hurrying up." Carter grumbled as he got the C12 on the underside of the cannon. "Get clear!" He shouted and we dashed back. As soon as we were out of the blast radius he keyed the trigger. A miniature sun of plasma appeared. SPARTAN-117's voice came over the comms, speaking to the Air Force. "Longswords go now!" Within ten seconds jet black shapes that were only visible because of the rising sun appeared and hit the Covenant forces. "Have a nice day, Spartans." The pilots radioed over. "Roger, team move into the pit now!" SPARTAN-117 ordered. The Spartans and my part of the team raced down to the bottom of the pit where there was something jutting out of the pit. It looked oddly familiar. There was a small entrance and when we came through it, what followed was familiar yet not. "What is this?" Carter breathed. What awaited us was almost a metallic geometric structure. There were holograms that appeared to be panels. "<em>Damn<em>," Lopez murmured. I walked up to one of the panels and when I touched the hologram it felt semi-solid. What was this? Nothing the Covenant had was like this, and they were excavating it, which meant it predated it. Before I could even start to talk, a radio burst through, "Spartan team be advised you have a large amount of Covenant inbound to your position, get the hell out of there now!" SPARTAN-117 looked up through the entrance and he must have seen something, "Private Thompson get explosives on this now! We can't let the Covenant get their hands on something that could be possibly advantageous." He ordered. Carter went over and placed a couple of packs of C12 around, "Alright, let's move!" We raced out and Covenant vehicles were racing towards us, we opened fire as we followed the Spartans out. "Sierra One-One-Seven Evac Pelican Kilo-Nine-Two is inbound. Get to their LZ now!" We raced along with the Spartans when a purple shape appeared in the peripheral of my vision. Next thing I knew I was on the ground, my ears ringing. A voice shouted, but it was as if they were underwater. "James!" A pair of arms picked me up and I got somewhat back into focus. I looked back and I saw Deveraux sniping at the Covenant that were on our tail. I heard a Pelican's engines and realized we were getting picked up. "Sierra One-One-Seven you are to evac now!" A voice came in as one of the Spartans, who had picked me up sat me down. I saw Carter's eyes widen as the Pelican started to rise. He raced over to the cockpit and I heard him shout "We still have a Marine out there!" The pilot argued back, "Our orders are to evac now!" I started to try to get back to Deveraux, but a strong arm grabbed me. The pilot argued back to something Carter had said, "I don't care what you say, we stay here we're all dead." As the Pelican's doors started to close I reached out, foolishly trying to get to Deveraux. The strong arm held its grip, and I heard an explosion, presumably the C12 detonated. As I started to cry I passed out.

End  
file.